"Maleficent"

By Helen Lutz

Anjelina Joli as Maleficent

Give me a fantasy or better yet, a fairy tale, and I'm totally enthralled and entertained. When I was young I was the type of kid whose parents would have to come back into my room after having tucked me in to remove the flashlight I had under the covers reading books. The *"Hardy Boys"* (I was never a *"Nancy Drew"* fan) were exciting, but fairy tales caused my imagination to soar. As an adult, I love the new fairy tales. The first *"Nannie McPhee"* was one of my favorites as was Drew Barrymore's *"Ever After: A Cinderella Story."* Every year while growing up I'd eagerly await Thanksgiving, not because I happened to like turkey, but because *"The Wizard of Oz"* would be showing on television in the evening (yes gang, I grew up before color televisions, VCRs, DVDs and Blu-rays). Now one of my favorite new fairy tales is *"Wicked."* If you've never seen it on stage, I suggest you put it on your bucket list. *"Wicked"* is the prequel to *"The Wizard of Oz"* and is enchanting.

Many of us have read the fairy tale *"Little Briar Rose"* more commonly known as *"Sleeping Beauty"* and are familiar with the story. The Queen gives birth to a beautiful baby girl named Aurora. In celebration the King and Queen invite the kingdom to see the child (quite the baby shower). During the celebration Aurora is visited by three good fairies blessing her with the gift of beauty and the gift of song. But before the third fairy can bestow her gift, the evil fairy Maleficent shows up to curse the child. Aurora shall prick her finger on a spinning wheel and die on her 16th birthday. In the Disney version our third fairy, unable to lift the curse, changes its circumstances so that Aurora will only fall into a deep sleep until awakened by her true love's kiss.

Disney has done it again with its recent release of *"Malecifent"* starring Angelina Joli as Maleficent. *"Maleficent"* is to *"Sleeping Beauty"* what *"Wicked"* is to *"The Wizard of Oz"* – the untold behind the scenes story. As with any retelling of a folk story (especially when Hollywood is involved) the events are portrayed a bit differently. The film opens with shots of the beautiful Moors and we meet a young Maleficent, queen of the fairy world adorned with a strong, enormous wingspan, she protects the kingdom. The Moors is land filled with color where all life forms are respected whether they are woodland fairies, trees or goblins; life is in harmony. Outside the Moors is the kingdom of humans. As long as each stays in their respective habitat all is well with the world.

Boys being boys, one day young Stefan makes his way into the Moors coming face to face with the winged Maleficent, they become friends. As they grow up, Stefan kisses Maleficent – a true love's kiss, but their visits become fewer and fewer as Stefan grows into his adult life without Maleficent. Most wars start with land grabs, we're watching one unveil in Ukraine, this story is no different as the King decides that he wants to control the Moors and plunder their treasures. As he marches on the Moors, Maleficent fights back bringing all her magical powers to bear repelling the land grabbing humans. The King places a bounty on Maleficent promising the kingdom to the victor – who better to undo Maleficent than the loveable boyfriend Stefan?

Now you know the setting for about the first 20 minutes of the film. Let me say that the unfolding of the story from the fairies, to the curse, to Aurora growing up and locating a spinning wheel, to the love behind "a true love's kiss" is heartwarming and beautifully told. Don't let all the professional movie critic naysayers dissuade you from enjoying this new spin on an old story. Jolie with her horns, green eyes, sharp features and haughty voice along with Diavel (Sam Riley), her sidekick raven, keep the story moving in a fun, clever and comical manner so much so that you want to make sure that you make use of the concession stand and porcelain facilities before the movie starts. The CGI adds magic to the story, but skipping the 3D might be a good idea. Maybe a little dark for the wee-wee ones, *"Maleficent"* delivers a great family movie, especially for those who enjoy a little magic and mystery every now and then. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats ... I give *"Maleficent"* ♡♡♡♡ this movie and will be a welcome addition to my personal library when it's released on Blu-ray!